

102 wk4 W18

Week 4 1/29-2/2	--Critical Casebook: Emily Dickinson --Critical Casebook: Langston Hughes	IRP #5: Ch. 31—Dickinson IRP #6: Ch. 31—Hughes
Week 5 2/5-2/9	--Writing about Literature <b>Begin Unit 2: Sociological Interpretation</b>	Draft of paper #1 due <b>Paper #1 Due</b>
Week 6 2/12-2/16	--“That’s not funny!” The politics of humor --Class, Race & Gender in “Everyday Use”	IRP #7: “The Catbird Seat” IRP #8: “Everyday Use”
Week 7 2/19-2/23	--Creole culture in Chopin’s stories -- <i>Antigone</i> and Civil Disobedience	IRP #9: <i>Bayou Folk</i> IRP #10: <i>Antigone</i>
Week 8 2/26-3/2	--Biographical v. Sociological Interpretation --Groundwork for the research paper	Draft of paper #2 due <b>Paper #2 Due</b>
Week 9 3/5-9	SPRING BREAK	

MONDAY:

**Prep:** Voices & Visions

<http://www.learner.org/resources/series57.html> or  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFeYPCv5F48>

**Due:** IRP #5 Emily Dickinson

**Assign:** IRP #6 Hughes

**Discussion:**

1. Paper #1: likely need for 1<sup>st</sup> person; what to do when struggling to produce 1000 words of solid content.
2. Theories “before”: What is a ‘wild night’? Should all this be taken literally?  
What happens “after”? confirm, reverse, modify, extend?  
Note how her “wildness” changes under the lens of biography.
3. “After” Voices & Visions: Opening minutes give good orientation to reclusiveness, idiosyncrasy,  
1:00-6:10 Intro  
8:00 ‘A Room of Ones’ Own’  
13:00 Vesuvius/volcano:  
15:00 Contemporary women’s writing. Sentimental “poetesses” of 19C  
17:45-20 Seminary & science  
20 Doubt vs. faith  
21:40 in the ‘without hope’ cohort  
28-ish: ironic sense of resurrection poem; 29+ death

32:30 Recluse/isolation  
35: the soul selects its own society  
37:45 Love?  
40:00 Co. Higginson, publication

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WEDNESDAY:

**Prep:** a) Voices & Visions –use learner.org site or  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xa2ZBxEzyjQ&list=PLlvGIsn3mAbnE0-qKeijmKsjDEfRcCvWG&index=6> as fallback.

b) Photocopies of exercise on how to use sources in a literary essay (handout:  
Emily Dickinson: Failed Poet—insert the parenthetical citations) [see below]

**Due:** IRP #6

**Assign:** Working draft of paper #1

Working draft guidelines: To earn a ‘check’ mark (counts as homework) in the gradebook, the draft must be 80% complete (i.e. at least 800 words + works cited listing), typed, double-spaced, 12 point font. It is a draft, so the writing is not expected to be polished and perfect. It is fine to have some portions still in outline form, but the draft must make sense to your readers (me and your classmates). Even if you don’t meet all of these criteria, it is better to bring in something than nothing—you can earn partial credit. ‘Plus’ marks will go to students whose drafts are at least 1000 words, have complete works cited and in-text citations, and generally are of above-average quality for a draft.

**Discussion:**

Before: unpackage the series of metaphors that make up “Harlem/Dream Deferred”. What do they add up to?

After: Which ‘dream’ is Hughes really writing about?

If time permits: “Thank You Ma’m” (pdfs)

### Emily Dickinson: Failed Poet

Nothing speaks “failure” quite like the works of Emily Dickinson, and this is illustrated most vividly in her exercise in mediocrity, “Wild Nights.” Examples of her poetic incompetence abound. Consider, for example, the poem’s final stanza:

Rowing in Eden—  
Ah, the Sea!  
Might I but moor—Tonight—  
In Thee!

If only I could speak with her directly, I’d say, “Miss Dickinson—what were you thinking?” The earlier parts of the poem clearly establish the details of a sea voyage on a *sailing* vessel, so how in the world are we, the readers, expected to deal with this sudden shift to a pair of lovers (I assume) in a rowboat? Comically, this brings “The Owl and the Pussycat” to mind. Great poetry? Hardly.

When “Shortly after Emily Dickinson’s death on May fifteenth, 1886, her sister Lavinia discovered a locked box in which Emily had placed her poems,” one could wish, in retrospect, that Lavinia had had the good sense to keep the box locked and pitch in on the refuse pile instead of, alas, inflicting some 1700 or 1800 wretched poems on an unsuspecting world.

And while my condemnation of Dickinson’s supposed artistry may come as a surprise to some, I am far from alone in this opinion. The world-famous literary critic, Donald Trump, interviewed for the *Voices and Visions* PBS series, suggested that

Dickinson was “a loser,” and that “[he] could write ten times better poetry than that spinster hack. Trump 2016!”

We know from her biography that Dickinson spent most of her life living a strangely solitary life as a virtual hermit in the family home. This suggests to many that she was more than just mentally fragile or unstable; she was, to be blunt, insane. And her mental illness gives us all the explanation we need to understand why she composed so many reams of meaningless drivel.

### **Works Cited**

- Dickinson, Emily. “Wild Nights.” *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*. Ed. X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 13<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson, 2016. 951 Print.
- Johnson, Thomas H. “The Discovery of Emily Dickinson’s Manuscripts.” *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*. Ed. X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. 13<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Pearson, 2016. 959-60 Print.
- Kennedy, X.J. and Dana Gioia, eds. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*. New York: Pearson, 2016. Print.
- Young, Veronica L., dir. *Voices & Visions: Emily Dickinson*. New York Center for Visual History, 1988.